O Christmas Tree

There we stood, 4 dumbstruck Canucks in the only 'real Christmas Tree lot' for miles, in the outskirts of Dallas, Texas. It was December 21, 1969, my family's first Christmas away from our beautiful, green B.C., Canadian, home. It truly felt like we were on another planet; sweating in 90 degree heat while standing on a dry, dusty plot of land covered in potholes. We might as well have been on the moon, with our mouths gaping open, staring at a dozen so-called Christmas fir trees. These trees had definitely had a hard life, abused by travel or lack of water they were a sorry sight of mutilated sticks.

Laugh or cry; what would it be today? Since moving to Texas, everyday had been filled with tears but not today. Our sweet Dad stood straight with his arms around my sister, Tina, and I and ever so positively said, "Well girls which one will it be?" My Mother in her clear British accent said, "Start counting branches and the one with the most will be the one we take home." Okay, we start counting branches and find one that has 11 branches, barely. So, on to our 67 Chrysler Newport roof it went. Once Dad secured it tightly and carefully, he paid the crook selling the trees, $100; an absolute rip off. "You won't find a real fir tree anywhere else; most folks just have an artificial one". We had never heard of artificial trees never mind using one for Christmas? We northern transfers were determined to have as normal a Christmas as possible since we were away from our home, family and friends.

Driving back to our new home on Burning Tree Lane, Garland, Texas, we were all silently wondering how our decorations would fit on this scrawny stick of a tree. My Mom chirps up, "Our star will look really beautiful on the tree, don't you think girls?" Tina and I just glance at each other and grunt out an acceptable "uh huh".

We gingerly take the tree through the patio doors so not to chance any damage to the '11' branches. Out come the boxes marked Christmas and we begin the journey of transforming this sad creature into the majestic fir it was meant to be. First we needed to secure the tree trunk into the stand so it would stand straight and that was not going to happen unless it gained about 6 inches. Dad grabbed some wood, a hammer and nails and built a frame around the trunk so it could fit into the tree stand.

Now the tricky part, the magic of Christmas part; where you transform a green tree into a sparkly, shiny treasure. "First the lights," says Mom and wrap as many as you can very gently around the full length of the trunk.

Ever so gently we wrapped the lights then the gold and silver garland around the lights and each branch trying to make them a little stronger so they could hold all the Christmas balls and trinkets. Slowly the transformation was happening, it was actually starting to look like a Christmas tree and when the last bauble was hung, my Mom presented her star to be

placed at the top. Of course the top of the tree was too flimsy to hold the star and it completely folded down.

"We need chopsticks," Mom says. So, I go to our 'junk drawer' to retrieve as many chopsticks as I could find and a pencil just in case. With some duct tape we secure the chopsticks and the pencil to make a pretty sturdy base; and then carefully place the special star on top.

"Plug in the lights!" And there before us stands the most incredible 11 branch, fir tree. Completely loaded with every Christmas decoration we owned and covered with at least 10 lengths of lights and garland."All it needs is some tinsel" says Mom. So, we attached the tinsel piece by piece and somehow it does bring it all together, we stand back and admire our handiwork and feel rather proud that we have a real Christmas tree for our first Christmas in Texas.

My Dad sits back in his brand new recliner with his pipe and starts to sing, "O Tanenbaum." Well this was a Christmas we will never forget and that is what making memories is all about.